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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR INR/R/MR; IIP/RW; IIP/RNY (FRANK); BBG/VOA; IIP/WEU; AF/PA; EUR/WE (DEBORAH MENNUTI)/P/SP; D/C (MCCOO); EUR/PA (BERBENA); INR/P; INR/EUC; PM; OSC ISA FOR ILN; NEA; WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE; DOC FOR ITA/EUR/FR AND PASS USTR/PA (ANN LUZZATO); USINCEUR FOR PAO; NATO/PA; MOSCOW/PA; ROME/PA; BRUSSELS/PA; USVIENNA FOR USDEL OSCE.

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - SECRETARY RICE VISIT TO FRANCE - IRAQI ELECTION RESULTS
PARIS - MONDAY, FEBRUARY 07, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

- [1](#)1. SECRETARY RICE VISIT TO FRANCE
- [1](#)2. IRAQI ELECTION RESULTS

(B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

WHILE DOMESTIC SOCIAL ISSUES DOMINATE THE FRONT PAGES OF TODAY'S PRESS, LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION'S FRONT PAGE CARRIES THE HEADLINE "PARIS AND WASHINGTON MAKE UP" ON THE EVE OF SECRETARY RICE'S VISIT TO PARIS.

SIPDIS

COMMENTATORS NOTE THAT THE CHOICE OF PARIS FOR THE SECRETARY'S SPEECH MARKS A DESIRE TO RENEW TRANS-ATLANTIC RELATIONS AND THAT HER VISIT TO EUROPE REPRESENTS PRESIDENT BUSH'S OVERTURE TO "OLD EUROPE." (SEE PART C)

LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION CARRIES AN INTERVIEW OF FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER MICHEL BARNIER IN WHICH HE CALLS FOR A RENEWED DIALOGUE WITH THE U.S.: "JUST ONE MONTH AFTER BEING RE-ELECTED PRESIDENT BUSH WILL BE IN EUROPE WHERE CONDOLEEZZA RICE IS ALSO TOURING. THESE ARE CLEAR SIGNS. THE QUESTION IS NOT WHAT CAN THE U.S. DO FOR EUROPE OR WHAT CAN EUROPE DO FOR THE U.S., THE QUESTION IS WHAT CAN WE DO TOGETHER."

LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION'S WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT PASCAL RICHEL highlights that while the "EU WAS IGNORED DURING BUSH 1, IT IS BEGINNING TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A POLITICAL FORCE DURING BUSH 2" IN A REPORT ENTITLED: "THE EU HAILED AS A PARTNER." "THERE IS NO LONGER TALK OF PUNISHING FRANCE, IGNORING GERMANY AND FORGIVING RUSSIA. TODAY CONDOLEEZZA RICE PROMISES A RENEWED DIALOGUE AND AT THE WHITE HOUSE BRAINSTORMING SESSIONS ARE NOW REGULARLY ORGANIZED WITH THE AMBASSADORS OF ALLIED COUNTRIES. THE EUROPEANS REMAIN SKEPTICAL AND WONDER IF THESE SESSIONS WILL BE SPENT BEING ABLE TO GIVE THEIR ADVICE OR HAVING U.S. POLICY EXPLAINED TO THEM."

THE HUDSON INSTITUTE'S LAURENT MURAWIEC CONSIDERS THE SECOND BUSH ADMINISTRATION IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO: "THE FIRST BUSH ADMINISTRATION ADVANCED CRAB-LIKE TOWARDS OBJECTIVES THAT BECAME CLEARER OVER TIME. THE SECOND ADMINISTRATION WILL DOUBTLESS PROCEED IN THE SAME ZIGZAG WAY. BUT TOWARDS WHAT? THAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN."

ANTOINE BASBOUS, DIRECTOR OF THE OBSERVATORY FOR ARAB COUNTRIES, PENS AN OP-ED IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO IN WHICH HE ANALYZES SOME OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ELECTIONS IN IRAQ AND THE PROJECT TO DEMOCRATIZE THE MIDDLE EAST. "THE TEMPERANCE OF THE SHIITE LEADERS SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED BY WASHINGTON WHICH HAS NO INTEREST IN SEEING A COPY OF THE MULLAH-STYLE GOVERNMENT THAT EXISTS IN IRAN APPLIED TO IRAQ. THE SUNNIS NEED TO BE GIVEN THE FEELING THAT THEY ARE NOT BEING EXCLUDED FROM THE POLITICAL SCENE. UP TO NOW, THE SHIITES WERE ABLE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE FACT THAT THERE WAS A CERTAIN CONVERGENCE IN THE POLICIES FORMULATED BY THE U.S. AND BY IRAN. TODAY, HOWEVER, THESE TWO COUNTRIES' INTERESTS DIVERGE AND EACH WILL DEFEND ITS SHIITES." (SEE PART C)

THE ISRAELI AMBASSADOR TO FRANCE, NISSIM ZVILI, SIGNS AN OP-ED IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION TODAY ON THE CONFERENCE IN SHARM EL SHEIK. "IT WILL TAKE A GREAT DEAL OF WILLPOWER AND COURAGE ON THE PART OF THE ISRAELI AND PALESTINIAN LEADERS TO MOVE TOWARDS POSITIVE CHANGE AND TO AVOID A SITUATION OF CHAOS."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

SECRETARY RICE VISIT TO FRANCE

SIPDIS

"FAMILY FEUD"

GERARD DUPUY IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (02/07): "REALITY, AS SAD AS IT HAS OFTEN BEEN OF LATE, HAS HAD A GREAT PART TO PLAY IN PUTTING THE PIECES OF THE TRANS-ATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP

BACK TOGETHER. THE INTERVENTION IN IRAQ MAY NOT HAVE TURNED OUT EXACTLY AS THE AMERICANS HAD HOPED. BUT THE SUCCESS OF THE ELECTIONS HAS SERVED TO CONVINCE THE STAUNCHEST ANTI-BUSH EUROPEANS, STARTING WITH THE FRENCH, THAT THEIR BOYCOTT OF THE PROCESS WAS IN VAIN. BUT EVEN IF THE FAMILY FEUD ENDS, WE SHOULD GUARD OURSELVES FROM SENTIMENTALITY AFTER HAVING BEEN OVER-DRAMATIC FOR SO LONG. A SMILING MISS RICE WILL BE IN PARIS LIKE A DOVE OF PEACE. BUT WAS THERE EVER REALLY A WAR BETWEEN US?"

"FEBRUARY 8"

BERNARD GUETTA TOLD LISTENERS THIS MORNING ON STATE-RUN FRANCE INTER RADIO: "TOMORROW WILL BE AN IMPORTANT DAY. WHILE THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFERENCE WILL BE TAKING PLACE IN SHARM EL SHEIKH, CONDOLEEZZA RICE WILL BE IN FRANCE. SHE WILL GIVE A SPEECH THAT WE ALREADY KNOW WILL FOCUS ON RENEWING TRANS-ATLANTIC RELATIONS. THE VERY FACT THAT SHE CHOSE PARIS FOR THIS SPEECH MARKS A DESIRE TO RENEW WITH "OLD EUROPE" AND THE FACT THAT THESE TWO EVENTS WILL TAKE PLACE THE SAME DAY HIGHLIGHTS THAT IT IS NOT JUST IN THE MIDDLE EAST THAT RELATIONS ARE CHANGING. INDEED, THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EUROPE AND THE U.S. IS ALSO EVOLVING. EVEN IF THE U.S. HAS NOT ADOPTED THE IDEA OF MULTILATERALISM, IT HAS COME TO THE REALIZATION THAT IT HAS NEVER BEEN SO UNPOPULAR AS TODAY. AND NOT JUST IN THE ARAB WORLD. AMERICA'S IMAGE HAS SUFFERED AND ITS IMAGE IS AS IMPORTANT AS ITS MILITARY MIGHT. GEORGE W. BUSH HAS DECIDED TO SOFTEN THE EDGES AND HOLD OUT A CONCILIATORY HAND."

"IT'S YOUR TURN AT BAT MS. RICE"

GILLES DELAFON IN HIS WEEKLY EDITORIAL IN THE SUNDAY PAPER LE JOURNAL DU DIMANCHE (02/6): "TUESDAY, CONDOLEEZZA RICE WILL BE IN FRANCE AND SHE HAS CHOSEN PARIS TO GIVE THE KEY SPEECH OF HER TRIP. WE CAN BUT PRAISE THIS DESIRE TO COMMUNICATE, EVEN IF FUNDAMENTALLY, THERE ARE STILL A NUMBER OF ISSUES TO SETTLE. FRANCE AND EUROPE NOW HAVE TO SEIZE THE HAND THAT IS BEING HELD OUT TO THEM. THE HAND OF GEORGE BUSH, WHO AFTER THE ELECTIONS IN IRAQ PERSONALLY CALLED JACQUES CHIRAC TO THANK HIM FOR HIS SUPPORT AND WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT. UNFORTUNATELY, OLD HABITS DIE HARD. SHE HAD BARELY LANDED IN EUROPE WHEN CONDOLEEZZA RICE LAUNCHED INTO A VIOLENT DIATRIBE AGAINST IRAN JUST AT A TIME WHEN LONDON, PARIS AND BERLIN ARE ATTEMPTING TO NEGOTIATE WITH TEHRAN TO PUT A STOP TO ITS NUCLEAR PROGRAM. MS. RICE WILL HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE EFFICIENCY OF REALPOLITIK AND HAPHAZARD IDEOLOGY. BECAUSE OF HER PRIVILEGED RELATIONSHIP WITH GEORGE BUSH, SHE HAS ALL OF THE CARDS IN HER HAND."

"THE PIANIST OF BUSH 2"

JEAN-CLAUDE KIEFER EDITORIALIZES IN REGIONAL DAILY DERNIERES NOUVELLES D'ALSACE (02/07): "HENCEFORTH, THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS GONE BACK TO ITS REAL PURPOSE. NOT TO EXPLAIN THE REASONS FOR A WAR, BUT TO RESOLVE CRISES, PREFERABLY BEFORE THEY DEGENERATE. AN EXAMPLE OF THIS IS WASHINGTON'S RENEWED INVOLVEMENT IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT. AS FOR THE RELATIONSHIP WITH "OLD EUROPE," THE EU IS NOT IN A POSITION TO CHALLENGE AMERICAN LEADERSHIP BUT WOULD SIMPLY APPRECIATE IT BEING MORE DISCREET, MORE RESPECTFUL AND. FRIENDLIER. THIS IS THE NOT SO SUBLIMINAL MESSAGE THAT BERLIN, PARIS AND EVEN ANKARA ARE TRYING TO PASS ON TO CONDOLEEZZA RICE, AND BY EXTENSION TO GEORGE W. BUSH."

IRAQI ELECTION RESULTS

"IRAQ: MASTERING THE SHIITE VICTORY, PREVENTING A BREAK-UP"

ANTOINE BASBOUS IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (02/07): THE ELECTIONS IN IRAQ CAN GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF THE GREATER MIDDLE EAST IS IN MOTION AND THAT MILITARY FORCE CAN SERVE TO ACCELERATE A PROCESS THAT TOOK CENTURIES TO DEVELOP IN THE WEST. IN THE EVENT THAT THE SHIITES EXERCISE AN ALL-OUT HEGEMONY IN BAGHDAD DUE TO THEIR MAJORITY IN NUMBERS, THE 'DEMOCRATIC MODEL' THAT IRAQ WAS INTENDED TO BE WOULD TURN INTO AN ANTI-MODEL THAT SHOULD BE AVOIDED AT ALL COSTS. UNCLE SAM'S FORAY INTO THE REGION WILL CONTINUE TO HAVE REPERCUSSIONS THAT WE CANNOT BEGIN TO ANTICIPATE." LEACH